



NTACT

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition



Quick Guide: Mental Health-Secondary Transition

Robinson High School has been collaborating with the local mental health agency to integrate mental health awareness and support in their school. Caleb, a 10th grader who has been diagnosed with ADHD and Generalized Anxiety Disorder is attending Robinson High School and has recently transitioned from a day treatment center, where he was for six months. A school-based mental health clinician is on site three days a week and runs groups to address the mental health needs of students. Caleb is involved in a group where he has been able to determine the best strategies and coping skills to use in the general education classroom. He knows he has a safe place to go to express himself, where he feels he is not alone, and will be given the support he needs to be successful. The school-based clinician consults with the general education teacher to provide information on strategies that are helpful for Caleb in stressful or challenging situations. Caleb is able to concentrate on his school work, building relationships, and improving his overall well-being because he knows he has the support and skills to be successful in the classroom.

What Role Does Mental Health Play in Secondary Transition?

According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA, 2013), 10.7% of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 (an estimated 2.6 million) had at least one major depressive episode within a year of being interviewed, and only 38.1% of these students reported receiving treatment for a major depressive episode within one year of being interviewed. Furthermore, over 60% of youth with mental health disorders fail to complete high school. These young adults experience difficulty in seeking or securing employment, completing or furthering education, and lack overall skills to establish or maintain supportive relationships or to live independently (Sondheimer, Clark, & Deschenes, 2007). Traditionally these individuals have been supported primarily through mental health agencies or psychotherapy. Recently, schools have begun to play a larger role in supporting students with mental health disorders. Through partnerships with the mental health community, schools are now able to provide additional support in the school setting, such as School-based Mental Health. As a result, students with mental health disorders, particularly those identified under IDEA, now have increased accessibility to transition services specific to their mental health needs leading to more positive outcomes.

Why is Mental Health Support in Secondary Transition Important?

Momentum for supporting youth with mental health disorders through transition has been growing. Research literature indicates those between ages 16 and 24 in transition programs for youth with mental health disorders face challenges in developing and implementing effective transition planning (Jivanje, Koroloff, & Davis, 2008). In addition to challenges faced during school years, adolescents with mental health disorders transitioning into adulthood are three times more likely to be involved in criminal activity and are at a much higher risk for substance

abuse (Sondheimer et al., 2007). Components necessary for successful transition may include traditional supports previously offered to students not identified as having a mental health disorder. According to Jivanje, Koroloff, and Davis (2008), understanding the specific needs of these individuals is an important factor in developing successful transition plans, which should include team members with expertise in mental health. Young people with mental health disorders often lose or receive less support at the age of 18 through a “narrower eligibility requirement” which can be detrimental to the affected individual, as well as their caregiver (Sondheimer et al., 2007). Gowen and Walker (2010) stated “When we think about transitions into adulthood, we often focus on independence, but the truth is that people rarely go through significant changes alone” (p. 4). Community partnerships, consistency, developing positive relationships with families, and communication with outside support services is crucial for creating positive outcomes.

What Does Research Say About Mental Health Support in Secondary Transition?

Recently researchers have begun focusing on young adults with mental health disorders transitioning into adulthood. Research exploring the importance of mental health support in secondary transition have yielded positive outcomes. For example, strong collaboration between educational and mental health agencies ensuring academic, employment, and mental health needs that are specifically addressed through well-designed transition planning has demonstrated a higher level of success for individuals identified with emotional and/or behavioral disorders (Davis, Jivanjee, & Koroloff, 2010). Styron (2006) conducted a survey and review of historical data of six young adults with mental health disorders receiving comprehensive services supporting transition through Young Adult Services, a program designed to support individuals over 18 who had moderate to severe symptoms of mental illness. Results revealed the longer young adults are involved with wrap around support during transitional periods, the higher quality of life and/or improved community integration. Providing ongoing support is critical for young adults with mental health disorders, particularly during times of transition. For each individual the level of support and from whom the support is provided varies. Awareness of the individual needs by each supporting member or entity is a key element in facilitating positive post-school outcomes for persons with mental health disorders.

Where Do You Find Resources for Mental Health Support During Secondary Transition?

The RTC for Pathways to Positive Futures (Pathways RTC; <http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/>) is the primary resource for information regarding improving the lives of young adults with serious mental health conditions. Pathways RTC seeks to assist young people with mental health conditions and their families through rigorous research, effective training, and dissemination of information. Through the research projects included at Pathways RTC, an intervention approach is used to build assets in four areas (a) self determination and positive identity, (b) youth-and young adult-directed decision making, (c) skills needed for adult roles, and (d) supportive relationships with peers and adults.

Another resource for supporting students with mental health disorders in transition is through the The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) evidence-based

practice toolkits (www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/communitysupport/toolkits), which are practitioner friendly and easily accessible. SAMHSA's mission is focused on leading public health efforts in the advancement of behavioral health throughout the nation by reducing the impact of substance abuse and mental illness. SAMHSA can be accessed at www.samhsa.gov. Finally, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest mental health organization with one main objective: "Building better lives for them millions of Americans affected by mental illness." NAMI offers education, advocacy, and assistance through a toll-free helpline, and leadership through public awareness events and activities. Information on NAMI can be located at <http://www.nami.org>.

How Does This Apply to Administrators?

- Collaborate with mental health providers within the community and encourage school mental health professionals to take a leadership role in fostering support for mental health within the school-<http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=28932> ;
http://www.promoteprevent.org/sites/www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/ESAGuide_0.pdf
- Hire an adequate number of mental health professionals to be able to support the mental health needs of students-<https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Resources and Publications/Handouts/Families and Educators/School-Based Mental Health Services NASSP Sept 2006.pdf>
- Provide opportunities for routine assessments of mental health needs of students within the school and the effectiveness of the mental health services offered-
<http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/featuredproducts>;
<http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Resources/Clin/QAIRsrc/QAQ.pdf>;
<http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current%20Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf>
(Appendix D)
- Train staff on how to respond to mental health needs of students -
http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/Webinar_CareerVisions.pdf
- Foster relationships with families of students with mental health disorders-
<http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf> (Ch. 9)
- Promote mental health prevention programming and intensive interventions, such as schoolwide positive behavior support- <http://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis-for-beginners>;
Also see NTAQT Quick Guide on PBIS-
http://www.transitionta.org/sites/default/files/Quick_PBISTier1_Final.pdf and
http://www.transitionta.org/sites/default/files/Quick_PBISTier2_Final.pdf

How Does This Apply to School-Level Practitioners?

- Know the rights of your students in regards to their mental health needs.-
http://www.jedfoundation.org/assets/Programs/Program_downloads/StudentMentalHealth_Law_2008.pdf
- When writing IEPs, include transition goals specifically addressing the mental health needs of your student.- <http://www.wrightslaw.com/blog/?p=35>

- Collaborate with outside agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation or local mental health agencies to ensure ongoing support is provided.-<http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/>
- Foster relationships with parents and family members, outside agencies, related service providers to further understand student specific needs.-
<http://gucchdtacenter.georgetown.edu/transitions.html>;
<http://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/educators/index.html>
- Establish routine communication with general education teachers on how to best support the student.- <http://www.specialeducationguide.com/pre-k-12/the-parent-teacher-partnership/>
- Provide education about student specific needs to those interacting with the student, while maintaining sensitivity and protecting students' rights.-
<http://www.disabilityrightsnc.org/sites/default/files/2013%20Higher%20Ed%20Self-Advocacy%20Packet%20Students%20with%20MI.pdf>;
http://www.jedfoundation.org/assets/Programs/Program_downloads/StudentMentalHealth_Law_2008.pdf
- Counselors and teachers should work in collaboration to prepare students to transition to post-secondary academic settings (if applicable). Teaching students how to navigate through the transition between high school and college in regards to accommodations is critical.-http://www.disabilityrightsnc.org/sites/default/files/2013_Higher_Ed_Self-Advocacy_Packet_Students_with_MI.pdf

How Does This Apply to Mental Health Practitioners?

- Become familiar with school policies and procedures. -
http://www.jedfoundation.org/assets/Programs/Program_downloads/StudentMentalHealth_Law_2008.pdf
- Consider offering staff training on how to best support students with mental health disorders.- <http://www.pbis.org>
- Educate those interacting with students on student rights. -<http://www.pbis.org>
- Collaborate with educators on writing IEP goals that will support students in academic settings and in transition. -<http://www.wrightslaw.com/bks/feta2/ch12.ieps.pdf>
- Assist educators in developing appropriate transition goals for students that will facilitate appropriate post-school opportunities. -<http://www.pathwaysrtc.edu>
- Establish ongoing communication with educators to better provide support for students.
<http://www.pbis.org/school/school-mental-health/interconnected-systems>
- Consider partnering with schools to implement SWPBS. -<http://www.pbis.org> and
<http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current%20Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf>

How Does This Apply to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors?

- Be aware of options available to students with mental health disorders.-
<https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/Publications-Reports/Public-Policy-Reports/RoadtoRecovery.pdf>
- Develop relationships with community partners who are willing to support students with

mental health disorders transitioning to the workforce.- <https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/Publications-Reports/Public-Policy-Reports/RoadtoRecovery.pdf>

- Collaboration with partners implementing evidence-based strategies such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS) where mental health treatment is integrated with employment services.-http://www.dartmouth.edu/~ips/page30/styled-8/files/vr_handout_web_lowres.pdf; <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA08-4365/TheEvidence-SE.pdf>
- Become aware of the services and supports for which transitioning students are eligible. Inform students of these supports and link them to the necessary individuals or agencies for access.- <http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/proj4-healthCareFAQ.pdf>

How Does This Apply to Families?

- Provide social supports including advice, practical assistance, and emotional support for <http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/projPTTP-Community-Support-Tip-Sheet.pdf>
- Educate yourself and seek out resources for supporting students with mental health disorders transitioning into adulthood.-<http://psychcentral.com/lib/15-ways-to-support-a-loved-one-with-serious-mental-illness/> ; <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/family-friends>
- Locate and assist with connecting individuals with mental health disorders available within your local community.-<http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/projPTTP-Community-Support-Tip-Sheet.pdf>; <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Family-Members-and-Caregivers>
- If provided permission by the affected individual, be involved in communicating with therapists, clinicians, sponsors, and other professionals supporting the student with mental health disorder.- <http://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/projPTTP-Community-Support-Tip-Sheet.pdf>; <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Family-Members-and-Caregivers>
- Assist the student in locating peers who have successfully navigated through transitioning into adulthood who can offer advice and support.- <http://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/friends-family-members/>
- Talk about mental health in a positive light to decrease stigma.- <http://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/parents-caregivers/index.html>
- Be prepared for a crisis, particularly in times of increased level of stress such as transition.- <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Family-Members-and-Caregivers/Being-Prepared-for-a-Crisis>

For more information on SWPBS implementation, <http://www.pbis.org> and NTACT Quick Guide on PBIS, http://www.transitionta.org/sites/default/files/Quick_PBISTier1_Final.pdf and http://www.transitionta.org/sites/default/files/Quick_PBISTier2_Final.pdf

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